Vol. 21.

Wordeater XXI Staff

Editor in Chief Loudmouth McKracken-the voracious- Now symbolizing the JJC last for literary fare.

The Young	The Beautiful (euphemism for old)
Molly Burns	Lorraine Barron
John K. Greene	John Stobart
John Puddicombe	
Wendy Shulk	

The poem "Word e tar" that follows immediately expresses poetically the overall reaction of The Young to most of the literary submissions for Wordeater XXI.

This issue comes to you
Straight from washroom walls
This issue is presented
By the overtense neurotic memories
Of those who expected thunder and lightning
And awoke the next day an empty shell
This issue is brought to you
By pseudo-dramatists whose denoument
Echos with gunshots and bloodbaths
This issue arrives
Courtesy of those who can promise eternity
and forever
Offhandedly rejecting their own mortality
This issue is sent to you
By people who believe in Oz
But never realized they live in Illinois.

--John Puddicombe

Consequently, The Young rejected poems, stories, concepts, more ruthlessly than The Beautiful--who are more sentimental, more appreciative, perhaps less exclusive. Barron and Stobart suggested that a second "edition" might be added to the selections by the whole staff (dominated by The Young) in order to test reader reaction to some of the submissions rejected or, in a few cases, not discussed because of tactical problems.

Thus, Wordeater XXI is divided into two sections. The Young, those works approved by a majority of the staff, and The Beautiful, those works chosen by Barron and Stobart, a minority on the staff. In most cases, however, on of The Young also approves of the entries, suggesting that the generation gap isn't a chasm.

Loudmouth just burps!

The Deadline for Wordeater

Submission deadline for Wordeater XXII is December 23. Poems, essays, cartoons, cover designs ($10.00 award for each), screenplays, editorials, jokes--any serious or comic, didactic or satiric fare created by a JJC person will be considered. Submit to J. Stobart, C1069 by December 23. Typing or neat printing is desirable. Manuscripts will be edited and will not be returned. All writers retain copyrights to their material.

Cover Designs by Mitzie Edwards

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Ahh, Art!

Of poetry and mice and men
How does the word flow from the pen
Without much thought or with much thinking
A work of art; a simple inking

Culture is a strange thing we say we contain
We must hate what we like and like the insane
There's a work of God's art in your local museum
Yet you turn your head and pretend you don't see him.

It's a man with torn clothes who is many years old.
A vagrant, a bum, here to get out of the cold
And yet in his ignorance he is better than you.
He looks at that canvas and sees the same too.
Some paint on a paper that costs lots of money
And yet as he looks it strikes him quite funny.
It's called art, it's worth millions, the people cry
Yet no one has stopped to wonder why.

--Curt Cavnar

A Message Lost
The Ballad of Kent State

In prior years of wartime fears
and skillful Nixon rule,
A circus came and rose to fame
at a midwestern school.

A protest group in center ring,
demonstrative of peace---
Would terror in Cambodia
and bombings never cease?

"Be still your cry, don't wonder why,
the medicine you'll take."
And years from now, the guilty crowd
will label it "mistake".

A regiment of dull costumes
in washed out greens and browns--
Who was held responsible
for sending in these clowns?

An audience began to form
to watch the goings on.
Four of these would never know
the battle wasn't won.

"We'll gun you down, so turn around
we'll stop you hippies yet."
And social experts years from now
will sigh "Unfortunate..."

--Nadine

The Legend of Lost Harbor
(Lusus Naturae)

A hundred and fifty-two years ago,
The Lost Harbor legend was born;
The wet April mists still dampen her wharves
As they did on that cold, fateful morn.

'Twas in seventy-three when the 'Bountiful Queen',
The best of the sea-going kind,
Was commissioned to sail the uncharted seas;
A new world and new lands to find.

The hopes of a nation filled her limp sails
"Cast off!" the command carried clear;
A silent tribute, her crew gave salute
To the unspoken prayers from the piers.

Sixty-two sailors boarded that day,
Sixty-two men, fit and strong;
And sixty-two souls were lost to the sea,
Swept up by her sad siren song.

'Twas the last that the Lost Harbor people did see
Of their dreams and their faith and their fears,
Time took its tell and emptied their souls,
And washed 'way their hope with its tears.

'Lusus Naturae' is carved on the stone
In place where the lost men should lay;
'A freak of nature' by an angry God
Claimed innocent men on that day.

The Lost Harbor people speak little today
Of the lives and the loves that were lost;
A few can recall the names of the souls,
A handful remembers the cost.

--Nancy Aydlett

You speak your gospel lies
word for word, line by line,
Go to church on Sunday
and space away the time.

Headline news screams loud and clear
send the man to the electric chair
Murder's a crime - so what do you do
flash your badge and send the currents through.

Your way to fight injustice
"kill them commies dead"
But when it comes to justice
do you realize what you said?

Headline news screams loud and clear
our frightened sons run everywhere
No amnesty for those who stray
Dead heroes - that's the American way.

So look at your words a little closer
read between the lines,
You'll find your verses rarely
ever seem to rhyme.
Your hypocritic oath
has bled upon mankind,
'Til all nomadic hope
has left its people blind.

--Molly B.

"Please
Love Mom."
Ended with request
instead of force.
And I regretted instantly
my harsh words.
Long ago
yet still in the air.
"You can make me do some things,
but you can't make me love you."
My rebellious lines
cut deeper than ever before.
And I am
sorry.

Realistically Speaking

No soul uniting
no fire igniting
Just alot of rap
and alot of fucking.
You didn't say eternity
I didn't ask forever
We just started out real
and ended together.
And after our lovemaking
there was no "ego inflation"
Just a couple of oranges
for a post-orgasm taste sensation.

Wildflower

I am a namesake of you
in a sort.
With all their poisons to trap
and kill you-
they detest your freedom.
"Beauty in bounds."
Why can't we learn to love without control?

"Recesses controlled"
the tower slowly tumbles
Throughout the existence
of man will surely mumble
Magnum forces hit us
with ease and more relaxed
The crystal commodores
ride the whip with slack
No one seems to notice
as the glitter falls
Stardoms lonely neon lights
flicker - not at all.

Industry

The fire breathing dragon
promoting illusions of radiance.
Intestinal tubes winding violently -
heaving smoke
from within its cancered tumor
Spreading filth
upon the smiles of monstrous towers.
The useless machine
travelling up to the pit
for the sake of noise -
then down again,
as if to repeat some inane
obsessment.
Black and shiny
slides of coal
being inhaled
and finally drained
down the throats
of all Amerika.

- Molly B. -

Margaret

She sat alone, among many others. I watched her in silence - there, yet far away.

Her eyes begged for laughter, and the lines on her face complained of lonliness, from growing old.

The door opened many a time. Each time, her eyes darted hopefully, only to once again stare into her fingernails-yellowed with the age of centuries.

And I wondered - when did it ever end?

Moments later, I found myself beside her, my youth intrigued her, as her age intrigued me.

She spoke of things long past, days when she too, was "somebody." She showed me her photographs, old and brittle - yellowed and wrinkled.

Her voice was slow, her movements shaky - and through her, I travelled back many years.

Pointing at pictures which filled the gap in her memory - a far-away look overtook her stare. She removed her eyeglasses to wipe away a tear. And I wondered where it was from - and who might have caused it.

I slipped away - in the middle of her married life, for her talk, though somewhat fascinating, had tired me.

As I opened the door, I looked back at her, and with her head bowed to her photographs , she was talking.

That angered me, I don't know why, and as I hurried down the street, her words fell repetitiously to my ears.

Once alone - I wept.

--Molly B.

Bootstraps

I have no bootstraps to reach for
I am already standing
Where my father stood
On the top of the hill
Told only to hold on.
To bear tradition is a heavy weight
And torrential rain falls
Turning foundations into mud
Others would like my place
On top.
Forming dynasties of their own
They strive to rise
I am slipping
And I see no reason not to fall.

--John Puddicombe

The Feeling of Snow

I walked along a road one day,
As far as I could go
And as I walked along this road,
It began to snow.
The tiny, lacey flakes fell slow,
Upon my cheeks and hair,
They even fell upon my lashes
Though I didn't feel them there.
They melted quickly as they fell
And soon they were all gone.
But even after the snow had left,
The feeling lingered on.

--Phyllis Doyle

Patrick's Bugs

As he entered the front door of the hospital, Patrick knew exactly what he would dislike the most. Those icy cold bed pans had left a long lasting impression on him. When he was five, he had his tonsils out, and remembered clearly hating every moment of the stay. The head nurse, Mrs. Stanch, had tied him in bed after he slapped her in the face. He tried getting dressed to leave with his Mom and Dad, but she somehow convinced him that she was stronger.

Nurse Stanch seemed to be around every time Patrick paid a visit to St. Mary Hospital. His Mom had said that when he was eight months old she was there fighting with them thru his bout with pneumonia. She had insisted that he didn't need his bottle warmed. Nurse Stanch knew that any baby could drink milk at room temperature. But she didn't know Patrick. He threw bottles that weren't warmed.

At seventeen months he was confined to the fog room. The room is filled with moisture and vapors. That time he kept her busy picking up his garbage. Patrick passed the time away by tearing apart the disposable diaper he wore. Piece by piece he tore the diaper from his bottom until the floor was covered with shreds of soggy cotton.

Each time Patrick had come out of ear surgery, Nurse Stanch turned up to wheel him out of recovery room. Of course, those four times he was only there long enough to fight off the needles.

This time as Patrick prepared for the most serious of his operations, he was quite worried about his hospital visit. Now, being ten years old, he knew this was no game. He was to have surgery on his neck to remove a large growth. As he walked down the hallway, he pretended that the surgery would give him a super voice. He imagined having a voice that could be heard for miles around. And the tubes in his ears would enable him to hear any other voice he wished to hear. As he looked around him, he wished he could be out of the pediatric ward this time. But there he was again. Back with the silly pictures on the walls. There were nursery rhymes and animals brightly painted everywhere. And Nurse Stanch would be there too. He remembered how she walked as if she were marching. And her voice was always commanding. When he finally entered his room, Patrick wasn't at all surprised to hear Nurse Stanch's voice behind him. "Now, let's get your p.j.'s on and hop into your bed, Patrick." "Yes Miss Stanch," he replied politely.

After he had changed, Patrick began to survey the room. Ar least he had a phone this time. If he got bored he could call his friends. He played with the remote controls for the T.V. and then decided to take a walk. As he passed the nurses station, a pretty nurse began walking with him.

"Would you like to see the teen room?" she asked softly.

"What is the teen room?" Patrick was very curious.

"Well, I'll show you. It's at the end of the hall."

They walked to the end of the hall to a small dard room. After they had entered she turned on a light.

"Here is a pool table and these shelves have books and games."

Patrick was very surprised. "Gee, this is great." Instead of kids' books with ABC's and that stuff, there were books about cars, racing, sports, and horses. Patrick looked thru the books thinking he might even read some while he was there. There was a sofa, two large chairs and the best part, the pool table.

"Boy, wait till Dad comes tonite. Instead of sitting around, we can shoot pool."

"O.K. Patrick, let's go back to your room and get ready for dinner." The pretty nurse led Patrick out of the room and down the hall.

The next morning after the nurse put the goofy gown and cap on Patrick, he began to worry. He knew they were going to cut his neck, but he wasn't too sure what else was going to happen. The pretty nurse came back and gave him a shot in his leg. He hated needles and was afraid of shots, but this wasn't so bad.

"Gee, that didn't hurt much," he smiled to his Mom.

"And you always used to cry when you'd get them," his Mom said as she held his hand.

After surgery and recovery room, Nurse Stanch was there to assist Patrick into his room. Getting off the cart was quite a job as Patrick was

still half asleep. He couldn't lift his head, so Nurse Stanch rolled him onto the bed, just like a log tumbling into water.

The next few days were painful for Patrick and recovery was slow. Nurse Stanch kept appearing with huge glasses of water, forcing him to drink them all down.

"You must drink plenty of liquids, Patrick," she would say as she held the glass to his mouth.

The pretty nurse always helped Patrick wash and always talked to him softly. She asked about his family and talked about school and sports. She was so patient helping him change his pajamas. It was quite confusing getting his arm in an out with the I.V. still in.

On the fifth day after his surgery, Patrick was abruptly awakened from a midday nap. A strange nurse shook him gently and said, "Patrick, we are moving you."

He awoke to see two other ladies rushing around the room with cleaning supplies. They began cleaning the walls, floors and emptied the room of everything. Everyone kept running in and out and rushing about. They removed his P.J.'s and put on another goofy white gown. They moved him into a smaller room with one bed. As he watched everyone, Patrick had realized that they all wore white gowns and masks. Patrick began crying. As the tears rolled down his cheeks, he felt so alone and afraid.

The pretty nurse hadn't been around, not even old Nurse Stanch. All these new faces moved him into a new room and left him there alone. The door was closed behind them as they left, which made everything seem so final. Just as he began whimpering like a lost puppy, Patrick saw a short, fat nurse enter the room. She also wore a white gown and mask, like the others. She brought Patrick a pitcher of water and a paper cup.

"Why the tears?" she asked as she saw Patrick crying.

"Why did they move me?"

"Oh, it seems you've picked up some sort of bug" She turned and left the room, closing the door again.

He screamed. "Bugs. That's it. I've got bugs." Patrick began crying very loud. He talked to the walls and the floor. "They have to wear masks so they won't catch my bugs. They're gonna' lock me in here. I only have water. Where are the bugs? I can't see them. Maybe the bugs will chew and bite on me until I'm dead. The door is closed and they don't care about me."

Patrick found the phone and dialed his home number. It rang and rang but no one answered. He called his aunt and the line was busy.

"No one cares. No one wants my bugs. They've all left me."

Patrick wiped his eyes on his sleeve and picked up the phone again. He dialed once more and finally reached his aunt.

"Aunt Jill, I've got bugs. They locked me in a little room," Patrick cried into the phone.

"Now wait, Patrick, what's going on?"

"I don't know. They put me in here and said I have bugs. Please get me out. I don't want them to eat me."

Patrick left the hospital two days later without the bugs. He was told that he had a staph infection that required the hospital to keep him in isolation.

As they wheeled him out of the front door he decided that the chilling bed pans weren't so bad. The hypo didn't make him cry. Even Nurse Stanch didn't give him a big hassle this time. The pretty nurse had cheered him. None of it was quite so frightening as the bugs.

--Phyllis Doyle

The Abortion

"Count backwards from a hundred by ones."

"Ninety-nine, ninety-eight, ninety-seven . . ." sluggish, syrupy sleep silenced the sharp pain of the needle, crept up her forearm and with a tired sigh, eased into her bloodstream. As the sleep spread to every nerve in her body, slowed her breathing to even, regular inhalation and stopped the frantic beating deep within her chest. Her entire body relaxed, flowed to the drugged rhythm.

"Can you feel any pain?"

Dully, she looked at the long snake-like thing coiled around his neck. It seemed to quiver and move of its own volition. With an effort, she forced herself to look at him, tried to see past the glare on his glasses.

"Can you feel any pain?" the question was repeated with impatience.

"No." Her tongue felt swollen and fuzzy; it seemed too large to fit in her mouth. She ached to cry out, to somehow stop him but she was powerless to move. Soft blackness crept to the edge of her vision and threatened to close her eyes. She fought the drug until she felt physically ill, then succumbed with a silent, exhausted sigh.

Maybe now I can sleep, she was only dimmly aware of thinking, maybe now I can forget all of this. God, how did this happen? What am I doing here? God, WHAT HAVE I DONE? Though physical tears could not form in her aching eyes, she was inwardly screaming and hating with every last ounce left to her. She hated him; he had caused this; he was the one who should be here, with his legs spread-eagled below him and humiliated as she was being humiliated. Instead, he was probably out with Syd, screwing with her again; the way he'd been screwing with her for the past six months.

She remembered the wide-eyed, vehement denials. The constant bursts of anger when she had questioned his fidelity still echo in her memory.

"I've never cheated on you since we've started going together." his normally tanned face seemed paler than usual, did not support the anger in his voice, "You're crazy."

And, as usual, she had acquiesced meekly, not pushed the point, even though Syd had told her differently. Again, she remembered their confrontation in the barracks' hallway. Syd had volunteered the information, uncaring of its effects.

Momma, where are you? Momma, I need you -- I'm in trouble and I don't know how to handle it. I don't know how to tell you without breaking your heart. Oh, GOD, I want to go home.

Even as the silent outcry ended, she saw herself when she was only seven. The little girl ran to her mother standing at the kitchen sink, tears streaming down her face. She had run away from home and been found hours later walking down the highway, apparently lost. Her mother had dropped the vegetables in the sink and held her tightly.

That same little girl had had a nightmare several years later, in which she had seen her mother die. She had awakened, screaming and crying and had found herself in her mother's arms.

She saw herself, new only a few days ago -- twenty-two years later. She sat in the doctor's office, listened in half-believing astonishment. The glasses gleamed at her as he nodded.

"You're eight weeks pregnant," he said, "I'm sure that you'll want to terminate it, considering you're still in the Navy. Regulations have changed, women aren't treated the way they used to be. Pregnancy is no excuse not to fulfill your obligation." His words seemed to echo through her head, bounced from the walls and hit her squarely in the chest. It was difficult to breathe.

I'm not going to make it, she remembered thinking. I'm going to have a breakdown. God help me, I can't make it by myself. A BABY. What am I going to do with a BABY?

The little girl returned to her mind. Her face was innocent, devoid of age and experience. Momma, I feel so dirty; I feel like I've let you down again, only this time I've really done it. I really need you now, Momma.

The little girl's mouth, her mouth, opened as sudden, blinding pain exploded from somewhere deep inside her. With a tremendous effort, she opened her eyes. Below her sheet-covered knees stood the doctor, glasses slipping down his nose. The pain built in intensity until it forced her slackened mouth open with a scream. Deep within her, the little girl screamed in unison; seemed to be losing her footing.

She watched the doctor reach out to switch on a small green machine, vaguely heard the muffled whine and felt the knife deep inside her begin its awful work. She watched the girl start to slide away from her childhood. Unseen hands switched on the vacuum that began to pull the child away from her innocence and naivete, away from the protective arms of her mother. Then the machine sucked out her body and her soul.

--Nancy Aydlett

The Revolutionary

A lone trailer balanced on the edge of a hill at the edge of town, suspended by a dream. Its silver top and sides reflected the sun, glowed in the sun, became the sun. A figure sat near the trailer smoking and gazing into the sun laughing. A house stood on the opposite hill, a wild dog howled, soon the figure was asleep. A dull moon replaced the two suns. A sharp light pierced the figure's eyes, he rose to his feet but steadied himself on his haunches and sniffed the heavy air, pointed little ears stood erect in the moonlight. With that he stood and crept up the same stairs and through the same narrow door that started his journey before his sleep. He stopped and turned at the metal door staring out at the motionless highway.

No one knew this man, no one depended on him, none of the women he knew could share his feelings. He was not discouraged, the moon needs me he thought, the sun needs me to cast a shadow. This made him smile and as he did, pointed little teeth grew out from his gums. Soft moon, ancient moon he repeated under his breath, soft moon, ancient moon. The night was his calling; the moon was his love, it was late summer and the days were getting shorter. But before summer's end he sensed that this very same moon would make him pay.

Hunger. The sink lay full of dishes. He pulled on a chicken leg, threw it in a dim bowl and sat on a small wooden stool picking at the food with his hands. While he ate he listened to the old cows coughing in the field below. Soon a howling dog drowned out the cows. He finished the food, lit a cigarette and walked to the door humming the end of Mahler's seventh. In the narrow passage he stared at the cows and switched to a Handel sonata for violin with harpsichord. The howling continued. In one motion, he swept up a small rifle from a chair and slipped through the arms of the door. He was in the middle of the second sonata, which has four movements, when he drifted through the cows. The moon lit his way, the spinosity of his ears were starlike in the night. He stopped and looked at the phantom trailer, its presence became a stubborn fact coexisting with himself. The rhythnic howling pierced his ears. He moved up the small path on the hillside. Swept into his own liquid motion, he found himself behind a few scattered trees to the right of the house. This was the first time he had seen the house up close, from the trailer one could barely make out the roof jutting up above the tree line.

He lay there motionless, a lone figure before the massive house. The guard dog approached lean and cautious, the figure crouched and cocked the rifle, a cigarette burned the sides of his mouth. The dog growled, pointed teeth reflected the moonlight. The creature pounced, there was a careful squeezing of the trigger. Only an echo of their coexistence remained.

--Bill Riccolo

Autumn Smiles

Grandma smiled constantly. Even when she had tears in her eyes she smiled. When she laughed out loud, she slapped her hand on her leg and kept laughing until everyone around her joined in. Sometimes we even forgot what was so funny, but that didn't bother Grandma a bit.

Ashmore makes Mokena look like a metropolis. Grandpa raised oats and corn on their eighty acres, and cared for twelve dairy cows, four geese, thirty-odd chickens, and innumerable cats and kittens.

Their house consisted of four rooms and a small pantry, which held the separator for the cream. Grandma also churned butter in the pantry and there was always a fresh batch for us when we came for a visit. The kitchen had a wood-burning cook-stove, on which she made biscuits and milk gravy for breakfast, and a hand pump for water at the kitchen sink. The two bedrooms contained feather beds and dressers loaded on top with pictures of grandchildren, neighbor's children, friend's children and pictures cut out of magazines of (what else?) children. Grandma said the magazine pictures reminded her of children she knew but she could never remember who they were. The outhouse was fifty-five steps away from the back door, and we had to walk through the chicken yard to get there. I counted the steps once when I wasn't in a hurry.

Every Saturday Grandma and Grandpa drove twenty miles to the nearest town to buy groceries. They drove an old pickup truck that coughed and sputtered its way into town, but somehow always managed to get there. When we grandchildren were staying with them, Saturday was the highlight of our visit because we got to ride in the back of the pickup and sing as loud as we could all the way there and back.

Grandma loved to hear us sing, though we were not exactly the Lennon Sisters, and she always smiled and applauded through the back window when we finished a tune.

When we arrived at the square, Grandpa took his place on the bench in front of the store with his pipe and his cronies, while the kids accompanied Grandma into the store. There were only four aisles in that store, but sometimes it took us three hours to shop because Grandma stopped to talk to everyone she saw. She asked about families, children, and what they were doing in school, the weather and anything that popped into her mind. She told about us and how much she was enjoying our visit.

When we walked away I asked Grandma, "Who was that lady?"

She replied, "Oh I don't know, I just met her today. Isn't she nice and friendly?"

She slapper her leg, and we all laughed our way to the next aisle.

Two summers in a row Jane, Karen, Paulette, Sue, and I attended a music camp at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston. We were all actively involved in our high school chorus and welcomed the opportunity to spend a week doing what we liked best. We stayed in the college dormitories, enjoyed our freedom from parental control, and felt extremely sophisticated.

I checked with Grandma first to make sure it was all right, then invited my friends to spend five days before camp started on Grandma and Grandpa's farm.

We took the train to Mattoon, shere Aunt Mary Martha met us. She monaged to squeeze five giddy teenage girls and ten pieces of luggage into her car, and we drove the miles to Ashmore all talking at once and happily planning our days ahead.

We descended on Grandma and Grandpa, immediately creating chaos in their small home. We crowded all of our luggage into the bedroom off the kitchen, where we were to sleep. Grandma had put two feather mattresses on the floor and one on the bed, so we drew straws to see who got the bed. Since we outnumbered them, Grandma and Grandpa relinguished the chamber pot to us so we wouldn't have to go outside at night. I had prepared my friends beforehand, but this was the first time Jane and Sue had ever stayed in a place without indoor plumbing, and they eyed the pot suspiciously. Nature's necessities helped them overcome their suspicions, however, along with everyone's modesty. We took turns emptying the pot each morning, cleverly calling the job "turd-duty" and the person in charge the "pot-dumper".

Long after Grandma and Grandpa had gone to bed, we stayed awake discussing deep subjects, planning the future, and sometimes being just plain silly. They never asked us to be quiet or told us it was time to go to sleep.

The smell of bacon frying and biscuits baking sailed into out nostrils and awakened us. We tumbled out to the kitchen in various stages of undress to stuff ourselves with whatever Grandma offered. We were unusually willing to help clean our mess, and took turns straightening up the bedroom and doing the dishes. We heated the water for dishes in a huge kettle on the cook-stove, and poured one-half the steaming water into a chipped white metal dishpan for washing, and one-half into a matching rinse pan. Grandma didn't mind that we put the bowls, silverware or pans away in the wrong places.

"I never put anything away in the same place twice myself, and there's more of us to look for everything new anyway" she laughed.

We fed the chickens, gathered eggs, played with the kittens, and took walks in the woods. We shelled the hickory nuts we collected, and Grandma make a cake with her special maple frosting and sprinkled the nuts on top.

In the afternoon, Grandma sat in her oversized rocker in the living room while we sat on the floor in front of her and serenaded her in three-part harmony. Her rocker moved in time to the music and her fingers tapped each note on the wide wooden arms. Grandma's obvious enjoyment filled us with enthusiasm, and we looked forward to her smile of approval at the end of each song. It's debatable who enjoyed these song-filled hours more.

At suppertime Grandpa was kindly indulgent, and patiently tolerated the gabbing and giggling of six women. Grandma was an instigator. She related

a funny story and at the punch line slapped her leg and laughed until tears came to her eyes. We laughed at her story, then looked at her and laughed harder, until all of us were out of control. Grandpa was grateful to have outside chores to do.

When it was time to go to camp, Aunt Mary Martha again chaufferred us, this time cramming not only the luggage, but also three grocery bags of hickory nuts and two bulging pillowcases stuffed with dirty clothes. My Aunt promised to bring Grandma and Grandpa to the concert, so with cries of "Bye. See you next Sunday. Thanks.," we drove off.

When Jim and I were planning our wedding, I called Aunt Mary Martha to ask if she'd drive Grandma and Grandpa here for the ceremony. It was important to me that they be here to share such a momentous occasion. Since Grandma and Grandpa rarely went far from home, it was quite a trip for them to make. Aunt Mary Martha assured me they'd come.

I peeked from the doorway of the anteroom where we girls were waiting, and watched as the florist pinned a corsage on Grandma, and a boutonniere on Grandpa. He seemed a bit embarrassed to be "fussed" over, but Grandma stuck her nose in her corsage and took a big whiff, smiling her delight at being treated so royally.

When Grandma came through the reception line, she hugged everyone, exclaiming about the beauty of the ceremony and how pretty and handsome we all were. A few minutes later I glanced to the end of the line and was surprised to see Grandma again moving slowly toward the wedding party. She congratulated us and we hugged some more. A few more people passed by, and sure enough, there was Grandma again. She outlasted everyone and altogether we hugged five times.

Staci, our adopted daughter, was born in 1968, and was the first great-grandchild to be born into the Swinford family. She was four months old when we introduced her to Grandma and Grandpa for the first time. We went to Aunt Kathleen's home in Charleston, because it was becoming increasingly difficult for Grandma to cope with a big dinner for so many people.

Grandma sat in the wooden rocker in the living room, her arms open and anxiously waiting to hold Staci. Grandma fed her, rocked her, and sang to her. Finally, Grandpa said, "Say, Maw, don't you think it's my turn now?"

Grandma pulled herself out of the chair and stood next to it as Grandpa took her place. As they gazed at Staci, both pairs of eyes were moist with memories. Watching them, I forced myself to avert my own eyes before the threatening tears were spilled. I knew how much they were cherishing and savoring this moment.

On Thanksgiving Day, 1969, Grandpa died of a heart attack at age 82. Grandma had hardening of the arteries then, and her condition was such that she couldn't be trusted to be left alone anymore. She lived with Aunt Kathleen in Charleston for six months, and spent the last seven years of her life with Aunt June in New York. Though she still smiled a lot and tappe her fingers in time to music, toward the end she was bedridden, had to be fed, diapered, and needed a sitter when my Aunt and Uncle went out. I wrote to her occasionally and sent cards on her birthday, but I never saw her again.

--Kay Stanick

Whilstem Village

It was the 21st star in the village of Whilstem. It was a peaceful day in Whilstem and a quiet one too. I was the only tree who knew why it was such a quiet day. Yesterday there were twenty-one/twenty-one year old Samens running around through the trees merrily. I knew that they would be gone today, since it was the day of the 21st star. I must tell the Triffles, the other trees, my trouble.

I remembered how every 21 years, for over a thousand the great Kill-A-Cloud had been visiting every village on the planet Onex, and feeling the heat inside my Roxter made me remember that he would be here soon.

When I awakened today all 21 of the Samens were gone. I glanced around at the millions of Triffles left, and noted to myself as I had been doing for the past 21 years that I was the only Precot left in the village. Kill-A-Cloud would want to kill me to help replace the 21 Samens. But what worried me most was where Kill-A-Cloud would get more Precot trees to help replace the 21 Samens. The Triffles were incapable of producing Samens, because none had ever done so. I looked around again. All the Triffles were still asleep. I wished that the other 20 Precots

could be here with me to awaken the Triffles as we did every year of the 21st star. But last year I was the only one left.

I walked slowly to the center of the village, where the transaction from Precot to Samen takes place. I cleared my trunk, hoping that it would awaken the Triffles, and it did. I watched the millions of Triffles move in towards me as they did every year, but it was so different this year, since I was by myself. Usually there would be 21 Precots standing in the center of the village while the Triffles slowly all gathered around. I almost felt frightened being all by myself. I remembered that the Triffles were of a low class. They couldn't even speak. All they ever did was wake up every 21 years and listen to the Precots get turned into 21, twenty-one year old Samens. Then they would slowly walk back to their spaces and fall asleep. Until the next 21 years came around.

I can remember watching the Samens. While the Triffles sleepy, would run wildly around, they would climb the Triffles and swing from tree to tree. Samens never came close to me, for there is a very old tale that says Precots will turn Samens into Triffles. For a Samen to turn into a Triffle would be terrible, because Samens can run and play and climb Triffles. All Triffles can do is sleep, walk slowly, and hear. I have watched the Samens for millions of years. They all look alike.

They have one big eye, which is connected to their legs. They swing from Triffle to Triffle with their legs. I don't know where they all go on this day, for I have watched them on the night before the day of the 21st star. I always seem to fall asleep and wake up early on this day, and they are always gone. So I move to the center of the village, with all the rest of the Precots, but today I am alone.

All The Triffles were around me. I have to talk to them now, for they had no idea that I was up here all alone, because they cannot see. The flame in my Roxter was getting bigger by the moment. I knew that Kill-A-Cloud would be able to see it soon.

I opened my hollow up all the way and said in a very loud voice, "Now listen carefully, Triffles, I know that you cannot see me. But I also know that you think that there are 21 Precots here. I am the only one; you must help me. I don't know what I will do, for Kill-A-Cloud will be here soon, to turn me into a Samen. And when he sees only one Precot on the day of the 21st star, he will be very angry, and probably turn me into one of you and make us all sleep forever." But the Triffles seemed to have no response. I begged to them, "Please Triffles, move up closer, so Kill-A-Cloud will not see me," but I got no response, they all just stayed in their places.

I could feel my flame reaching higher into the sky. I could even feel the cooling of Kill-A-Cloud's breath upon them. I begged once more for the Triffles to hide me but they stayed in their places. I wanted to go run and hide behind a Triffle, but I knew that it would take many Triffles to hide the huge flame from my Roxter.

So I just stood there in the middle of the village. Kill-A-Cloud was now directly above me, for I could see him. I heard the noise, that terrible noise that was heard every 21 years, when the Precots turned from trees to Samens. I didn't look.

It was quiet for some time now, like it had been earlier that morning. I slowly looked around. All the Triffles had moved back to their places and were sleeping. I looked down. I wasn't a Triffle, I was a Samen. I could see my two legs. I ran around. I started climbing upon the Triffles and swinging from limb to limb. This was fun. I hadn't known Kill-A-Cloud couldn't see. But I was glad, because, I knew that I would be gone in 21 years. I would enjoy these 21 years instead of worrying, like I had done when I was a Precot.

--Danette Krieger

The Slammer, It Works

The black grilled gates clanked shut behind me and my taciturn guard. Ahead lay the narrow dank corridors leading to my home for the coming year- Arkansas' Federal Reformatory for Men.

My name is Paul Atkins and that year, 1954, was one I will never forget.

The first month was spent in quarantine. I remember endless days of examinations. During one physical, we (me and the other new inmates) were made to stand naked in a long line of goosepimpled flesh. We were pinched and prodded like cattle being examined by the farm vet.

For me, the worst part was the proctoscopy exam. Imagine bending over a cold metal desk while some stiff checks out your insides with an instrument rather like a telescope. Even at seventeen, a man has some shreds of modesty left. No more. I'd traded my privacy for a six-state joyride in a '50 Plymouth coupe.

Next came the shrinks; seven to be exact. They tested my I.Q. and examined my nueroses. They questioned my home life, my sex life, even the number of bumps on my head. You name it. This one guy developed a theory about my motives. Deep-seated hatred for my Mom and Dad, so he said, caused me to steal that car. How can you hate some one you never really knew?

I was found to be of average height, health, and intelligence. Maybe I was a little underweight; a bit too cocky, but, nevertheless average.

My remaining week in quarantine was spent waiting, being watched for signs of anti-social behavior.

Friday finally came--the big moving day. As was the custom, I was manacled and led thru a courtyard to the prisoner's barracks. As I followed the guard, I wondered what was to come. On the outside, you hear terrible things about prison life. How much of it was true?

"Once you give into 'em its all over. If some palooka decides he can strongarm you for a pack of cigarettes, pretty soon he'll be demanding a carton. Before you know it, you and everything you own will be his."

I met alot of guys that first week. Time and time again they told me the same thing, phrased in accents from all over the United States. As a fish (newcomer) I was considered open game for all the frustrations and desires of the older inmates. If you let yourself get pushed around--even once, you've had it. They will never let you be.

Johnny Patricco was the #1 badass in the barracks I was assigned to. Six foot, dark, dangerous-these would be likely adjectives to describe the man who'd some day be a good friend. Back then, though, Johnny was the man to avoid, and I did.

One day, we had spaghetti for lunch. I stacked my plate high and joined the group at my table. The stud sitting on my right had finished eating. He stared up at me as I sat down and began plowing into my favorite dish. Without any warning, he shoved my elbow, causing food and fork to go flying across the table. Sudden silence, a mantle of fear, descended on the table.

"Hey Mac," He said. "That's a lot of food for a runt like you. You trying to catch up or something? Iffen you were real smart, you'd put bout half of that here on my plate."

I kept my eyes down and concentrate on the food in front of me.

He growled threateningly.

"Runt, I was being nice before, just trying to help out a friend. This time, I'm telling you, man, gimme some of that spaghetti."

I was being forced to pay attention I looked over at him and said quietly. "Look, mister, if you're still hungry, why don't you go get some more up at the counter. You wanna fight, okay; but not here of all places. We'll both end up in the hole."

"I ain't scairt of no damned guards

"All right, you wanna prove you're tough, okay. But not in here. Be in the bathroom in ten minutes."

I finished my meal under six pairs of watchful eyes. One guy piped up.

"Hey, Paul, you know you can't beat him."

"Yeah Paul, it's suicide." Others chimed in as I left the dining room.

Mr. Tough Guy was waiting as we had agreed. When I walked in it was so quiet, I could hear the faucets dripping in the background. Plop. Plop

To make a long story short, the guys in the dining room weren't far from wrong. I carried a new title - one of respect. In the eyes of the other inmates I'd proven myself. No "patsy" here. I was a man to be reckoned with.

Shortly, thereafter, Johnny Patricco stopped by my bunk.

"I understand you ran into Tommy Little last week. He's not easy. Had a thing with him myself, oh, maybe eight months ago. Uh-You gotta extra cigarette, Paul?"

Well, we sat and jawed for a coupla minutes. When Johnny left, I had a feeling. I knew there'd be other fights, other tough guys, but I'd never be quite so alone again.

Arkansas' Federal Reformatory was a sprawling complex of barrack-like buildings. The inmates ranged from seventeen to twenty-eight with sentences ranging from one to twenty-five years.

I was assigned to Barrack A - a long dorm of 110 beds that were divided into two rows of cots. Each morning, on the way to breakfast, we'd pass the B Barracks. This is where the "girls" lived; those inmates who were chicken or thought of themselves as the "gentler sex." Each of the barracks had its own exercise and game yard. In the main building, C, were the dining rooms, chapels, hospital and bakery. Those inmates not working in C were assigned to one of several different factories in the complex.

When not working, we spent much of our time reading, listening to radio, trading stories or competing at games. Johnny Paticco was white lightening on the ping-pong table. He taught me everything he knew. Together, we were sure death in doubles games. Radio was our lifeline to the outside world. We'd follow the news avidly, particulary the World Series games and the fights. At that time, Rocky Marciano was the reigning king of boxing. Gambling was the #1 sports game on the inside. I remember that it was a bad year for Ohio. In 1954, the N.Y. Giants took the Series in a whirlwind, beating the Cleveland Indians in four games straight. In June of the same year, Ezzard Charles, a heavy weight title champion from Cincinnati, fought Rocky in N.Y.'s Yankee Stadium. Weeks in advance, bets were placed and the statistics argued. Johnny and I sided with the Rock. We didn't have much money, so cigarettes were the ante, instead. We were allowed only one carton a week by the prison and, of course, gambling was taboo. On June 17th, Marciano came thru on top, although it was one of his rougher battles.

The next morning, I roamed the exercise yard collecting my bets from the disgruntled losers. As I was returning to the dorm, a guard called after me.

"Hey Atkins, come here a minute."

I kept walking, pretending that I hadn't heard him. I could hear him running up behind me. Suddenly, his hand grabbed the collar of my jacket. Dragging me backwards, he threw me up against the wall.

"Looks like you finally gained some weight, Atkins. What are ya carrying in that jacket? Take it off."

As I slowly unzipped my leather, the cigarettes fell out one by one -- twenty-one packs in all.

Within the hour, I had a new home, no cigarettes at all, and a ten day stint in the dreaded "hole."

My room was, maybe, 4'x8' at the best. Grey concrete surrounded me. Width-wise, I could span the walls with the palms of my hands. I recall that I had to duck as I entered to avoid hitting the cement ceiling. There was no bed, no chair, no toilet. The only thing in the cubicle besides me, was a cold water faucet and a brown spider in the far right corner of the wall. In the other corner was a cement hole with a drain pipe leading under the floor. Here, I gathered, was their idea of a "john." The door was of solid metal with a pass through space at the bottom.

Although I could see no one, I heard the sounds from other cells and smelled the rankness of urine and unwashed bodies. I didn't get any supper that night, but I heard the trays being distributed to other prisoners.

Eventually, I fell asleep on the floor. Some time later a guard showed up, carrying a thin pallet and a shrunken moth-eaten blanket. In the morning, my make-shift bed was taken away. Later a trustee came by wheeling a large cart with coffee and trays of freshly baked rools. Those rolls smelled so good that my mouth watered as the sounds grew

near. The trap door opened and a small tray appeared. A single small cup of black coffee was all that was on it.

As the hours passed, I sat and watched the brown spider spinning his web. At least, he was free to come and go as he pleased. He was well fed and free. I wished that I could trade places.

Lunch and supper were the only breaks in the monotony of that ten days. Meals consisted of one tablespoon each of potatoes and whatever vegetable was being served. Coffee to drink - black only. There was no meat, no bread, no dessert.

I thought I'd go nuts. I'd have given my right arm for just one of the rolls that they served in the mornings. I missed my books almost as much - I would have paid anything for something to concentrate on other than the spider and myself - even a cereal box. As the days passed, each one a year in length, I did a lot of thinking about the changes I'd make in my life when I got out. I'd beat the statistics on inmates returning to prison. What's more, I was going to be somebody, and like Scarlett O'Hara, I vowed that I'd never go hungry again.

--Marie Summers

The Beautiful Section

Coffeebreak

I have been listening to the changes
in my life.

I am a whirling funnel cloud
skittering across miles of
open space, picking up
pieces of broken homes
dropping off the
useless frag-

ments of
existence.

A beginning and an end,
I am caught in the winds of
confusion,
Sorting out the misinterpretations.

I am young.

Alive and breathing I join a mass of
humanity in an acceptably confused
state.

Cold and dead I am the new addition
to a population of pitifully misunderstood
beings.
Sanity is the defining line here

And I am afraid.

--Nadine Gonda

For Renee

I saw you in the bakery shop.
It was quite a surprise you know.

Awkwardness is so useless...

I wanted to talk---I mean
really down to earth
gutsy, honest-type
talk.
Don't ask me why.
We hardly know each other
and yet

You fascinate me.

I've read into your mind and
found an endless enigma
of personalities.

Maybe I'm nosey, or just interest
in your highs and downs
and ins and outs...

I appreciate your diversity.

It's a shame exterior shells loc
us out of each other and ourselv

Aren't formalities a bitch?

--Nadine Gonda

Another Pen

Another pen
Another line
Another day
Another ryhme

Another me
Another you
Another play
Another fool

Another hello
Another good-bye
Another question
Another lie

Another you
Another me...

--Renee Rovenhagen

A Screened-In Summer Storm

It is raining outside.
A warm, fresh, green rain
the kind that carries the grass in the air
and wisps it past your nose with a cool
tingly spray of splashing water fallen
from the gutters.
In the distance the sky is rumbling
And the night is flashing
day-to-night-to-day
and then dark again.

We are on the porch,
sheltered, but not shut in
by the screens.
Lazily lying together in the lounge chair
n watching the gentle fierceness of the
flashing sky and breathing the sweet-smelling
wetness in the air.
The breeze sweeps through us,
carrying the dampness and interrupting our comfortable
warmth
pulling us closer to each other.

"Do you want to go in?"
"No, please, let's stay awhile longer. I'm not really
cold, are you?"

And once again the
warm comfort returns.

The storm quiets and a persistent calming shower
carries the grass once again.

I am watching you:
Slowly falling eyelids
All's-right-with-the-world smile
I, too, close my eyes
and fall into your dream.
But your heart is beating
a wonderfully alive and peaceful feeling against
my shoulder.

I curl my arm around your back tighter
but gently
Sleep.

Your beard is so thick and soft against my face
and I run one finger through the
tangled hair of your chest,
within your opened,
sleeping, shirt.

The rain is steady
but the storm has become distant rumbling and flashing
somewhere unseen.
The air is colder and the breeze is sweeping through the porch,
first hesitating,
and then rushing with confidence.

I reach to the floor for the blanket
You are awake and we are pulling the cover and
settling once more into a
comfortable suspended existence.

"Are you warm?"
"Fine. You?"
"Good."

A squeeze of your arm around me is enough
Your sleep is not a barrier,
only a beckoning.

Beneath the blanket
warm, breathing, alive,
And above
the constant pounding of the rain on the roof
and the gutters and the flash of day-to-night again.
I am holding your waist,
and you mine.

Wrapped in the blanket of our arms
we are two, yet
one.
I hold you tighter
You are not sleeping though your eyes are closed.
And you pull me tighter, closer to yourself.

We are two souls reaching out to each other,
trapped by the awkwardness of our mortality
I am watching you watching me and we are
seeing

Seeing the deepness
of ourselves and our one self
and all only in a moment.

We are so close
Believing in the freedom of our being.

It is raining outside

But we will not notice
in our screened-in summer storm.

--Nadine

That Face

No longer can I sit and watch
That face that comes and goes..
No longer can I pretend
It's just someone I used to know
Inside were sunbeams that used to dance
Whenever the face would appear,
The lighted streak that used to shine
Has feverishly become a tear.
These days the face still comes and goes
No longer as a friend
Just someone passing thru the nite
Where everything must end...
Please walk away from all that's left
Leave no echoing footsteps behind
No longer can I sit and watch
A face from another time.

--Phyllis Doyle

Holding You

When I hold you
it's like the first time I held you close
feeling all my love pouring out to you
comforting you,
protecting you,
caring for you,
loving you.
I will never let you go,
or be alone,
or be hurt by those who wish you harm.
I'll just be content to hold you,
hold you every day for the rest of my
life,
and feel everytime, just the way I felt
the first time.

--Louis E. Brick

Life is so hard to understand.
They tell us everything is planned.
Then how come it's so hard to live?
How come it's so hard to give?

--Cynthia Sunkel

Loneliness

Loneliness is an empty feeling,
Deep down inside.
You don't feel appealing,
Or have any pride.

--Cynthia Sunkel

Impressions

...whispery October night in New Lenox, home again, familiar surroundings, warm atmosphere. bathing in the reassurance of old friends and genuine affectionate glow of new friends...discovered for the first time - new friends to love and care for...understandings the web of life, discoveries...awareness.

talking of old times...past days and experiences gone by... of Tom and Brett and warm summer nights at the "Sweet Tooth"...so young, so confident, so innocent...echoes of "Dark Side of the Moon"...Summer of 1973 gone...

years go by, 1974, 1975, 1976... gathered together again for drink and food. new sounds this time, people growing up...St. Francis, JuCo, SIU, Columbia, film, engineering, journalism, futures to take...leaving behind pleasant memories of youth, some painful, too. anticipating the future with hopes and expectations...fear and uncertainty... confidence and awareness...new perceptions...affirmation and hope...inexperience and nakedness.

Striving to do what is right... what is good...

--R. Mallis

You Color My World

Your moods are as varied
as the rainbow
Each color marking
a separate and distinct
part of you,
Yet you are always the same person
inside.

Could it be
that you are only one of many?
Or are you the special
and unique person I think of
you as?
Giving so much and taking so little
Bringing happiness to so
many...

I may go through life
on a merry-go-round
Dizzy with the beauty and
lore of this world
But I will always
be reaching for that
golden ring
of which you consist.

--Stephanie Estell

The Dream

It was the same dream that she had had for several years and although she knew that it would end as it had hundreds of times before, the now-familiar terror covered her body with an icy sweat. She shivered uncontrollably beneath the several blankets.

She was never quite certain how the dream began, nor was she sure what caused her to think of the one phobia she consciously acknowledged. Each time, she became aware of the dread gnawing its hole deep in her stomach, the apprehension trickling down into her knees so that they threatened to buckle. Each time, she was powerless to awaken or fight the bizarre chain of events that now, she knew by heart.

This particular vision wasn't black-and-white, nor was it in complete color. Rather, a dirty, mustard yellow dominated the scenery, dissolved into murkiness from the shadow. Always, she was reminded of an overcast day, with a heavy, foreboding sky above her and a cold, bare earth below. It was as if she stood in a state of limbo where the laws of nature did not exist. And always, there was a cold wind whipping about her, a wind that reeked of rotting flesh, (or her conception of it.)

She was alone. She stood on some kind of plastic platform that was somewhat similar to a diving board. The narrow board stretched a few feet in front of her and only several inches to either side. Some force stronger than she, stronger than her inborn will to survive unwrapped her tightened fingers from their grip on icy iron bars, lifted each foot in automaton-like steps. Her toes gripped the rough edge of the board and she stood, perched, on only inches of the substance. Every muscle in her body had abruptly slowed, become heavy and sluggish. Her heart seemed to beat only spastically, convulsions deep in her chest. She was not aware of breathing.

And then it began. Unseen hands pushed her over the edge. The fall did not end mercifully, quickly, instead lasted several hours. Perhaps she was higher above the earth than she had first thought. At any rate, her fall seemed endless. It was as if she was watching from a distance, without any other emotion than utter terror. Her body grew numb from the fright; only her heart moved, lurched sickeningly. Nausea rose in her throat. She was not aware of tears streaming across her face nor of the quivering weakness in every muscle. She was utterly powerless.

Vague and incoherent strings of thought crossed her mind, then were swallowed by bestial terror. Helplessly, she watched the ground slowly rise to meet her. A foot touched first, then crumpled beneath her leg. Blinding panic closed her throat as the pain exploded. In all of the previous nightmares, she had never hit the ground. Each had been frightening repeats of the awful, helpless feeling and she had awakened, shivering and clutching the blankets.

She heard rather than felt the long bones in her legs crack the oppressive silence. The bones shattered on impact and then bounced up. The joints in her elbows splintered and pierced through the wrinkled skin, as belatedly, she realized that this was not a dream. She was awake.

Her mouth opened in silence. An awful scream worked its way past her throat to shatter the silence for only a moment. Then her skull cracked open.

--N. Aydlett

M. Bolan

Marc's guitar told us a lot
How to Bolan Boogie
And Woodland Rock

Marc's mouth told of the Venus Loon
the Mambo Sun
The Be-bop Moon

Marc's music told us how to Bang A Go
To be a Jeepster
To Ride a White Swan

So farewell to The Slider
Who art in Rock 'N' Roll Heaven

--Richard Merrill

The High

The gray-haired man in the cockpit of the small airplane sat back and drew lazily on his cigarette. The pilot, seated next to him, sat stock still, his steel-like eyes staring straight ahead, piercing the heavens.

They had chatted about their cargo once in a while, but between the widely-spaced bits and pieces of conversation, they remained totally silent.

The pilot, usually a very talkative type, could stand this last pause no longer. He had to break the ice:

"What'd you say this stuff was again?" A dumb question, the pilot thought, but it broke the silence nonetheless.

The gray-haired man sighed impatiently. "I told you. A new type of experimental pesticide. The government just came out with it. All we got to do is find a field, dump this shit on it and see what happens."

"Oh yeah. A Boone's Field did ya say?"

"Yeah. Boone's Field. It's just below us. You better take her down."

* * * * *

It wasn"t that Ross and his carload of buddies were too far away to notice the plane lower and coat Boone' Field with its yellowish, powdery contents. It was merely that Paul had their attention, repeating to them the

location of his marijuana plants.

"How big are they?" Marty asked.

"Big enough. You can't see them from the road. All you guys gotta do is pull up, I'll go in, get the stuff, then we take off."

The '69 Mustang slowed down on the deserted gravel road long enough for Paul to jump out. The car went up the road, turned around, came back and parked.

Ross and Marty both smiled sardonically as Paul soon came out of the thickness of Boone's Field with an armload of plants.

* * * * *

It was Friday. Paul had already dried out the plants, cleaned and deseeded them, bagged them and had two quarter-pounds fronted to two acquaintances for selling. He was just discussing the bliss of his future 'wealth' when Julie called.

"Hello?"

"Hello? Paul?"

"Oh. Hi, Janice."

"Hi."

"What's happenin'?"

"Not much. I hear you got some pot for sale."

"Yeah."

"What kind?"

"Oh, just a little home-grown," Paul mentioned as he winked and smiled quizzically at Ross and Marty as they sat on the semi-circular sofa with him.

"Oh." There was disappointment in Janice's voice. Paul could tell. There was a moderately-lengthed pause as Paul thought. After a glint came to his eyes, he spoke.

"I'll tell ya what, Janice. Why don't you come down tonight and we'll try some, have a little party, y'know?"

"Well...."

"Ross and Marty'll be here, so bring a coupla yer friends." Paul's pals were whispering excitedly now.

"OK," she finally said. "I guess so."

"Bring a coupla yer friends?"

"Sure."

"Need someone to pick ya up?"

"Nope."

"Well, OK then. Catchya later, babe."

"Ok. Bye-bye."

* * * * *

Ross already had the pipe filled up when Paul came back into the room.

"What <u>are</u> you doing?" Paul asked in an annoyed manner.

"What does it look like I'm doing?" Ross shot back. "Don't worry. You sure as <u>hell</u> ain't gonna run out by tonight. Besides, we used my car to get it. Hey, Marty. Come in here."

The sound of the toilet flushing and Marty's footsteps echoing down the small hallway came almost simultaneously. Paul sat down and Ross took a match to the bowlful. He took the first hit and went into a seizure of hacking coughs.

"Goddamn, Paul." Ross swore after he had recovered. "Don't you ever clean this thing?"

"I just cleaned it and put a new screen in it day before yesterday," Paul retorted.

Ross handed the pipe to Marty. "Careful," he warned.

After raking a hit, Marty handed it to Paul. Paul took a hit and almost choked. Controlling himself, he handed it back to Ross. Ross took a hit and passed it on. Marty took a hit and passed it on. Paul took a hit and passed it on. Marty took a hit and passed.....

* * * * *

It had been a long time. Paul looked down at his Army shirt which he now used for a jacket.

Yes, Viet Nam seemed eons ago. It seemed eons ago since the bad scars on his right leg had sent him home.

It seemed eons ago since he had seen people suffering and dying, many being friends he had made while in the service. It had been eons ago since.....

"Did you ever stop to think that the most exciting thing you will ever do in your life has already been done?"

"Who said that!"

No one answered.

"WHO SAID THAT.'"

Nothing.

It had to be one of those smart-asses sitting next to him, one of which was holding something that looked like a pipe.

"I'll teach you!"

There it was again.

"Who said that!"

"I'll teach you!"

"No! I'll teach YOU!"

Private First Class Paul Haywood sprang up and went to his room to get his .45 Automatic. He wanted to teach them.

* * * * *

Ross dreamed of meadows. He could not move. He could only dream of meadows. Large, rolling meadows. A large, infinite field of blue above, interrupted by a few, white, wispy things. Grass. Tall, golden grass. Meadows. Meadows, meadows, meadows. Meadows.

* * * * *

Marty stared intensely into the bowl of the pipe, The black cavity within spread to reveal Marty sitting on the sofa on which he now sat. He could see himself reaching over and undoing Ross' heavy Budweiser belt buckle and pulling his jeans down. He could see himself going down on Ross.

The Pipe was on the coffee table now and Marty was doing just what the Pipe had told him to do.

* * * * *

Private First Class Paul Haywood sat in his room now with his gun in his hand. He looked up. The Viet Cong stood all around him, their rifles aimed in his direction. They were going to kill him. Slaughter him just like his buddies were slaughtered.

Paul had to think fast. He knew that his .45 was loaded.

"Well, now," Paul said, but not aloud. "You all ain't gonna take me without a fight. If I go, I'm gonna take a few of you with me."

Private First Class Paul Haywood sprang up all at once and started firing.

* * * * *

"STOP!"

The command came from the Pipe. Marty obeyed.

* * * * *

Meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows, meadows,.....

* * * * *

The .45 Automatic empty. A few more Viet Cong standing.

Paul looked down into his old Army trunk. More shells. If he could just reload in time.....

* * * * *

When the second set of shots started up, Mrs. Clayton was on the telephone immediately, calling the police.

* * * * *

Janice's station wagon pulled up about three driveways down from Paul's house. It could go no further. Squad cars, spectators, and flashing, red lights filled the street.

"Wait here," Janice told her two friends as she got out.

She made her way to Paul's front lawn. She stood there a while before curiosity got the best of her. She asked a nearby patrolman what was going on. She was shocked by what he said.

"What do ya mean 'They went nuts!'?"

"Sorry, Miss," replied the officer shaking his head. "That's the best I can do for ya. One guy was just numb, y'know? What do they call it? Cat---uh---catatonic, somethin' like that. Another guy kept tryin' t' get in our pants. Slobberin' all over th' place! God!"

"Are they going to jail?"

"Nah. The funny farm. A doctor was called in, y' know, a shrink. He said that as far as he could tell, they were undeniably----and probably, incurably----insane. Just like the rest."

"What about the other one?"

"Here he comes now."

The two men carried the stretcher containing the lifeless body out of the house.

"He kept shooting at anything and everything," the cop continued. Whether it moved or not. One officer was wounded. It was the only way."

"You said something about the rest."

"Yeah. This is the sixth call of this type in the past few days, three tonight. People goin' nuts everywhere! God! Must be some really bad shit goin' around. All we found on these guys was a buncha low-grade reefers. Maybe it's some disease or somethin'. You don't know anything about this, do ya?"

* * * * *

Across town, the young man lit up the joint and coughed.

The kid he got the pot off of said that he had gotten it off of Paul Haywood which probably meant that it was ditchweed.

"Oh, well," the young man sighed as he took another toke. "I might cop a little buzz."

--Richard Merrill

"Johnnie"

Johnnie could not drink, Johnnie could not vote,
Yet when the call to arms came, Johnnie said
he'd go.
He was a fool to take the chance and
fight for something wrong.
But all the same he went and fought.
He said, "It won't be long."

Friends of his were smarter though, to
Canada they went.
Cause years from now they knew somehow,
full pardons would be sent.
Was it right or was it wrong, Johnnie
didn't know.
He's back from there now, living, but
moving kind of slow.

You see poor Johnnie lost his sight, his
arms his legs, his brain;
He now is just a breathing shell who lives
with the insane.
But that's O.K. cause Canadian friends
are loyal and true blue.
They're all good U.S. citizens now like Johnnie,
me, and you.

--Curt Cavnar

For the Girl Who Said "No"

What made us meet, was it fate?
That long haired girl I saw
What makes you think you're so great?
Although I could find not a flaw.

But one, the women's power of rejection
You can refuse or accept, you can wait for
perfection.
But that is not me, according to you.
My hair is not blonde, my eyes are not blue.
But temember, Bold Redfords are few.

When I'm old, in my eyes, Grandchildren
will twinkle.
May you live all alone with your memories
and wrinkles.
Yes remember, it could have been you and me.
I don't need you, God knows, there's more
fish in the sea.
And why should I settle for a carp like thee?

--Curt Cavnar

Barnyard Rape

I grew up alone. Well, not really alone, in the sense there was just me. True, the other siblings had flown the nest almost by the time I arrived, so there were no other children to grow up with. However, one could not truthfully say I was alone, for the moment I escaped the house in early morning until forced back in at night, I had numerous companions; dogs, cats, cow, goats, pigs, chickens and ducks, to name a few of the domesticated ones. To this day, it's hard for me to read people, but I can tell you what a cow or a pig has on its mind at any given moment. However, that's another story.

This story is about an old drake we had at one time. He was a Mallard duck, handsome in grey and green finery, with a white ring of feathers around his neck like a clergyman's collar. This Mallard had a 'thing' for chickens, not knowing, I supposed, that ducks were suppose to confine their amorous attentions to other ducks only. I found this out later myself, so you can't fault the old drake duck. At the time, you see, it was just another happening during a busy day of life on the farm.

Anyway, this drake was just crazy about the hens, and one big, fat Rhode Island Red hen in particular, (much to the disgust, I might add, of the harem of neglected Mallard hen ducks). Naturally the hens did not return the drake's romantic inclinations, and the ole Rhode Island Red hen in particular lived in dread of each new day. She couldn't enjoy the pursuit of tender juicy bugs and succulent grasses because of the constant threat of being pursued herself; one just never knew when romantic notions would strike the drake. When it happened, he'd whip his snakey ringed-neck around the barnyard like a submarine periscope zeroing in on a hapless freighter. Then, with his quarry fixed firmly in sight, he'd rise off the ground with flapping wings and churning feet tip-toeing the ground, quacking like a banshee all the while.

At first sound of this lover's call, the red hen went into frenzied panic and with terrified squawkings, ran for her life, (well, I guess honor would be a better word...). Around and around the barnyard they'd go, with many and varied spectators looking on, me among them. I'd always pause in whatever was occupying my attention at the time to watch the race and observe the outcome with interest. It never varied much - the red hen pounded along like a pacer in the Hambiltonian squawking all the while, with the drake in hot pursuit and gaining ground with every round they went. At last the poor ole red hen would reach the end of her endurance and, with a final shriek, stagger drunkenly while the drake, with a

final triumphant quack, would mount and have his way with her. After, the drake would strut off with self-satisfied gabbling, happy wing-flapping and happy-type tail-shaking, while the red hen would just sit in the dust, too worn and weary to rise. The spectators would return to whatever it was they'd been doing when this mis-matched race began.

Then I began to notice the race was becoming shorter each time, until finally the Rhode Island Red would, upon hearing that wild love-call, simply squat where she stood, and with down-cast head and limp, out-stretched wings, await the Mallard drake's arrival. I never did really figure out if she had begun to enjoy the whole thing, or if she had decided there was less wear and tear in passive resistance.....

--Mitzi Edwards

Why

Why can't I seem to come alive
to those who are around me?
Why is it when I'm with them all
your face returns to hound me?
Why is it when I hear a voice,
it's only yours I hear?
And when I'm in a crowded place,
it's you I want so near?
Why is it when I play guitar,
I'm hearing your voice sing?
and when I stop these lonely thoughts,
I'm not thinking of a thing?
How can I feel alive at times,
then sense the hole inside me?
and why, when with somebody else,
I ache for you beside me?
and why, when in my bed at night
alone, and sleeping soundly,
I wake up suddenly, in tears
missing your arms around me?
I know now why I can't let go
of thoughts of just we two --
my mind won't take the bitter truth
I'm still hung up on you.

--Nancy Aydlett

Another Sleepless Night

How could it have happened?
Where has it all gone?
I've spent another sleepless night,
I thihk it's early dawn.
Since you've gone, the time has stopped
you once made me complete,
The times we had together then
make life now bittersweet.
It hurts so much to see you now --
you want to go alone,
Somehow I've made your mind retreat
and you've gone off on your own.
So now it's just a waiting thing,
more lonely nights I'll cry,
But as I lie alone, I know --
my love for you won't die.

--Nancy Aydlett

TRIAD'S Answer

i once asked how it would be,
you and her or you and me.
i sat alone, unknowing and wondering
if your love was dead or secretly growing.

you asked of me "what can i do?
why should you care?"
i needed you
and you weren't there.

and the words still hung on the air
"why can't we go on as three?"

hurt weighed hard on my shoulders
old as me then so much older
saying to me:
"i have to be free, not a part of three
to simply love as me."

and you kept saying
"i really don't see why we can't
go on as three."

we loved each other
all could see
until my mind once came to me
i had to love
i had to live
i only had myself to give

you kept repeating endlessly
"i really don't see why we can't
go on as three."

--Nancy Aydlett

Ignorance Is Bliss.....

Rhythm and Rhymes come tumbling out in pleasant, brisk profusion;
It's squeezing them into Pentameter that causes my confusion.
Tetrameter and Trimeter, four and three of each,
Burdens me and forces me to places I can't reach.

Ah, but the soft, sensuous sounds of lovely, lilting Alliteration
Holds for me a fearfully fond and forceful fascination...
BUT those Amphibrach, and Amphimacer, and even Anapest.
Tease my brain and scar my soul and never let me rest.

An Alexandrine can only bring a break-down of my mind;
A Dactyl, Dimeter - A Hexameter too - can only make me rue
The learning of those rules, the knowledge which I find
Makes my poetry all the more, forevermore, alarmingly askew!

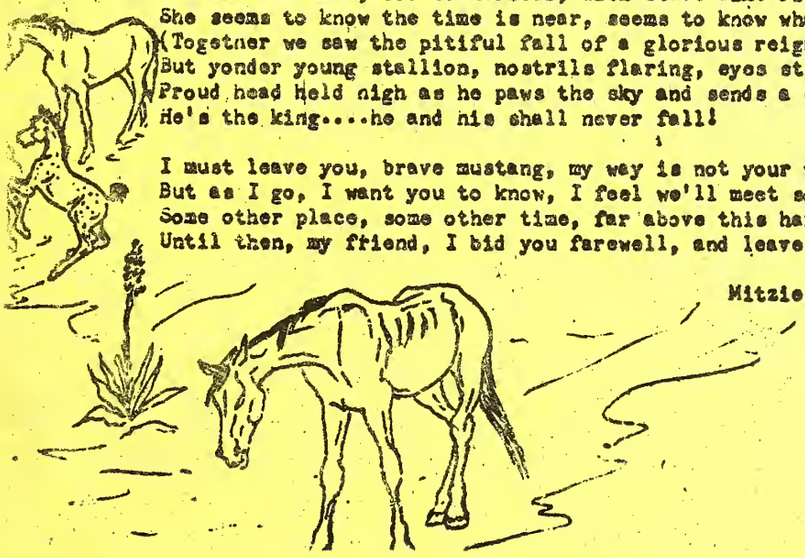
Mitzie Edwards

Mustang

They say you're small and mean, not good for much, they say.
I don't agree, but I can see the end of a by-gone day.
Oh mustang, ranging free, what happy days you've known,
From smallest foal and mare to yon king upon his throne.
They say your days are numbered, that you can't afford to last;
They seem to forget the part you played in history now gone past.
See the young ones gamboling about with nary a care in their soul;
Their mothers close by, standing dignified, playing out their role.
But sad old mare, off to herself, with stave-like ribs and cast-down head,
She seems to know the time is near, seems to know what they have said.
(Together we saw the pitiful fall of a glorious reign o'er the land).
But yonder young stallion, nostrils flaring, eyes still glaring, he is in command.
Proud head held nigh as he paws the sky and sends a challenge to all:
He's the king....he and his shall never fall!

I must leave you, brave mustang, my way is not your way.
But as I go, I want you to know, I feel we'll meet someday.
Some other place, some other time, far above this harsh dark plain.
Until then, my friend, I bid you farewell, and leave you your crumbled domain.

Mitzie Edwards



WORDEATER AWARDS

Every year, in the spring, Loudmouth McKracken overflows with gratitude due to the literary fare produced by JJC people. He has set aside approximately $200 to award the most productive poets, playwrights, sotry tellers, and essayists for 1977-78.

Loudmouth tells John Stobart who these people are, and they are listed in the last Wordeater produced.

There will be two deadlines to remember for the Spring Semester. For Wordeater XXIII, February 24; for Wordeater XXIV, April 28.

Submit manuscripts to John Stobart in C1069. Cover designs used are awarded $10, front or back, for each issue. The number of the issue should be worked into the design. Any type of writing or drawing will be considered by the Wordeater Staff if created by a JJC employee, student, or alum.

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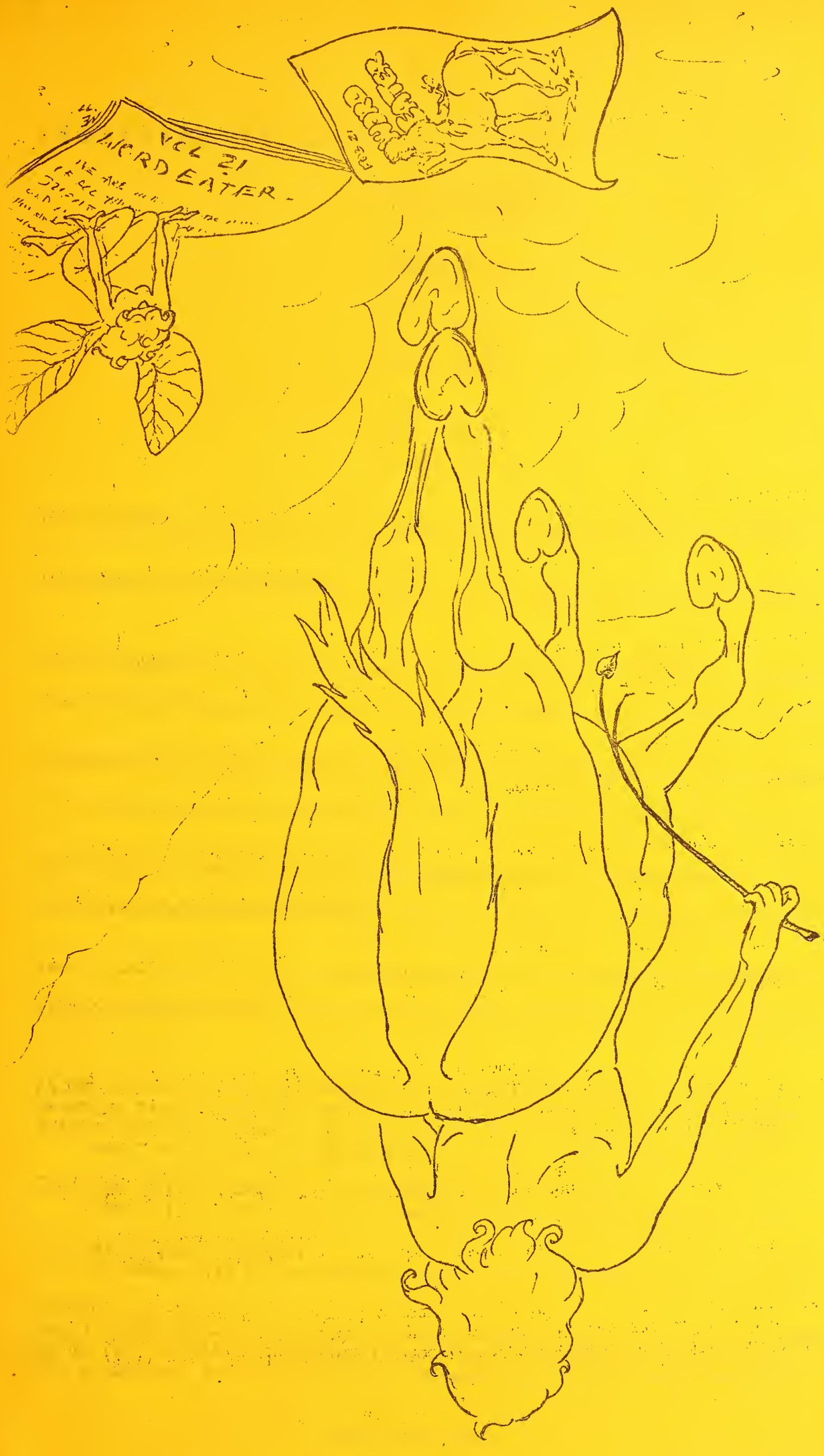
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